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ABSTRACT

The goals of the Beginning Teacher Induction Center at Glassboro State College, New Jersey, include providing beginning teachers with information based on research and development, as well as training, and technical assistance. The program provides support for beginning teachers by expanding professional learning experiences and helping beginning teachers develop individual teaching styles based on observation, discussion, and consultation. The new teachers are assisted in adapting to their new school environment and encouraged to value lifelong learning. Services offered to participants include: a seminar series, a teacher talk line, a newsletter, informational packets, support teams, and technical assistance to local education agencies implementing support programs for new teachers at the local level. A description is included of the Provisional Teacher Program, an alternative path to certification offered to college graduates who did not major in education. (JD)

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EMERGING COLLABORATIVE ROLES AND NEW TEAM APPROACHES IN MODELS OF SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS IN SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

FEBRUARY 7, 1990

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GLASSBORO STATE COLLEGE

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PROVISIONAL TEACHER PROGRAM
Models Of Support For Beginning Teachers

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NEW MODELS OF SUPPORT

FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS IN SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

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BEGINNING TEACHER INDUCTION:
THE BRIDGE TO LIFE LONG LEARNING

For decades, the transition from college supervised teaching to independent classroom teaching has posed problems for the novice or beginning teacher (Johnson and Ryan, 1970). Requirements and expectations of independent classroom teaching are so numerous and varied that they overpower the novice teacher whose 'primary' concern to date has been 'presenting the lesson'. Literature is replete with case studies and anecdotes that reflect adjustment difficulties faced by teachers entering the profession (Stone, 1987). To complicate matters, most first year teachers tend to be both idealistic in their thinking about and unrealistic in their expectations of independent teaching. Consequently, many of these first year teacher become easily disillusioned and frustrated. Some suffer symptoms of heightened stress and anxiety (Johnson and Ryan, 1980).

In light of this knowledge, the School of Education and Related Professional Studies at Glassboro State College, through a Challenge Grant from the Governor of New Jersey, planned, designed, and initiated the Thomas E. Robinson Beginning Teacher Induction Center. Named after the third president of Glassboro State College and modeled after nationally validated induction models, (Hawks and Robards, 1987), the Center was designed primarily to provide support services to beginning teachers throughout the South Jersey eight county area. It was intended that these services would reduce the tide of attrition and teacher dropout during the first three crucial years of teaching (Frankiewicz, 1987).

An Advisory Committee, composed of public school administrators, classroom teachers (K-12), and college of education faculty, was established to review existing literature related to beginning teacher induction models and to plan the Glassboro model. This Advisory Committee continues to function to review, evaluate and recommend policies and procedures to the BTIC Director and staff.

GOALS

Goals of the Beginning Teacher Induction Center were formulated from recommendations of the Advisory Committee after a thorough review of the literature related to teacher induction combined with specific suggestions and concerns of local educational agencies. They included: providing beginning teachers with research and development based information, training, and technical assistance; providing support to beginning teachers by expanding professional learning experiences; helping beginning teachers develop individual teaching styles based on observation,

discussions, and consultations; assisting beginning teachers to adapt to their new school environment; encouraging the value of life long learning among beginning teachers.

ELIGIBILITY

Request for support services came from a wide range of teaching professionals: e.g. recently certified teacher candidates, newly employed teachers, substitute teachers, teacher aides, teachers new to the district and teachers returning to the profession after a substantial absence. Available resources required limitation of initial services to teachers entering the profession for the first time, with support continuing through the first two years of teaching.

A model of a Teacher Support Center was developed and recommended by the Advisory Committee and adopted by the College. It was decided that eligibility for services from the BTIC included: employment as a first year, full time elementary or secondary beginning teacher; possession of a valid New Jersey teacher certificate and employment in a public or private school in one of the eight southern New Jersey counties included in the catchment area. (It should be noted that graduates of Glassboro State College approved teacher education preparation programs are eligible for support services for up to 24 months following the completion of their program regardless of their teaching location when it is realistically possible to provide such support at the site).

SERVICES

was decided to enter the field with a complete set of services for the beginning teacher. These services to include: a Seminar Series, a Teacher-Talk Line, a Newsletter, Informational Packets, Support Teams, a resource AV-Media-Print Resource Library and Technical Assistance to local districts in implementing a variety of support programs for new teachers at the local level.

SEMINAR SERIES

Beginning in August of 1988, the Center offered six, full day seminars on topics identified by Veenman (1984) as being the most frequently cited concerns of beginning teachers. These included: Beginning the School Year, Establishing an Effective Classroom Management System for the Beginning Teacher, Preparing for Parent Conferencing, A Clinic on Common Problems, Evaluating Pupil Learning, and Ending the School Year. This was done in order not to interfere with the already complicated first year schedule of the beginning teacher. Seminars were scheduled for Saturdays and school holidays, because first year teachers felt they did not want to miss a day in their newly established

routine and administrators did not have to provide substitutes, a serious problem in this geographic area.

During the 1988-89 school year, the seminars were attended by more than 300 beginning N-12 teachers. The format of the seminars included a general session with a presenter who had attained recognition at either the national or state level in the specific area of expertise. Following each general session were smaller follow-up classroom sessions centered around the three most common, organizational modes: self-contained, departmentalized and special class teaching. In the follow-up sessions, classroom strategies were presented, discussed and modeled for the novice teacher. Presenters/facilitators in the follow-up sessions were recruited from New Jersey Teacher of the Year Award nominees and winners, New Jersey Governor's Recognition Award winners. It was felt that if new teachers were to feel good about their choice of teaching as a profession, and if they could be expected to remain in teaching after the first year, they should be exposed to and encouraged to interact with the best role models of their profession, hence the follow-up sessions were titled: "Meet the Pros." At these follow-up sessions, new teachers were encouraged to share their concerns and anxieties.

Feedback from those in attendance at the Seminar Series was highly positive and comments such as: "Excellent! Informative! Helpful!"; "Well done! Eternally helpful to a nervous first year teacher"; "Very helpful! Use of personal experiences was wonderful, I would make suggestions, but I've found no room for improvements"; "I love these workshops, I plan to attend them all, I hope you have a lot more", were common.

NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter, The BRIDGE, is published by the BTIC. It is designed as a two-way communication service between experienced professionals and beginning teachers. Regular columns include the latest encapsulated research findings related to problems encountered by new teachers, tips from the veteran to the novice teacher, a sharing column between new teachers, a calendar of events related to professional development opportunities, bibliographies of supplemental resource materials and personnel, and legal concerns/restraints that affect New Jersey teachers.

Both new and experienced teachers are encouraged to submit articles focusing on concerns, problems, and successes in teaching. The newsletter is mailed to over 1700 persons. Among the recipients are chief school administrators, classroom teachers, staff supervisors, college faculty, state department staff and others concerned with providing support for beginning teachers.

INFORMATION PACKETS

Another service provided through the BTIC is the design, preparation, and distribution of Information Packets related to the Seminar Series, presented in the Seminar Series topics. In addition to the topics presented in the Seminar Series other packets are being developed based on the Veenman (1984) list.

To date the BTIC has developed a dozen packets. Each year the packets are updated to insure their currency. Packets contain a synopsis of the latest research on the particular topic, strategies for immediate implementation for the teacher, professional journal articles, and an up-to-date bibliography.

The packets are distributed, free to those attending the Seminars. Other individuals (or school districts) may purchase copies at cost.

SUPPORT TEAMS

Based on the review of research and nationally validated models of teacher induction, the Advisory Council recommended the establishment of On-site Support Teams for the beginning teacher. Four pilot teams were established during the first year. Each was composed of a beginning teacher, a mentor teacher, a building administrator, and a college liaison person. Meetings were scheduled either on a monthly or on a need basis. Frequency was determined by the beginning teacher after consultation with the mentor teacher. Selection of the beginning teacher, the college liaison and the building administrator proved to be a simple task.

Selection of the mentor raised a series of concerns: identification, selection, recognition, remuneration, etc. Guidelines, developed through a review of the research on mentoring, were presented to district administrators and the process was left to them. The BTIC to date, has encountered no problems from those districts.

At the conclusion of the first year, numerous requests for the establishment of additional support teams were received. To meet the demands it was decided to run a three day summer training seminar for mentor teachers along with one half-day orientation session for their administrators. (A condition of the mentor teacher training was that the administrator from the mentor teacher's district must attend the orientation session). The request for 30 candidates to be trained as mentors was filled in only five days.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

Another of the services offered through the BTIC was direct assistance to the local districts. In districts where teachers have been trained as mentors, or where beginning teachers are encouraged to utilize the services of the BTIC, BTIC staff members continue to offer suggestions on how to develop support programs at the local level.

A variety of models of support for beginning teachers have been presented to local districts. When appropriate, these are coupled with the services of the BTIC to develop a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP)* for the beginning teacher. For the new teacher in most districts, this meets the state requirement of continued professional development. BTIC staff work with local personnel to decide how those teachers trained as mentors can best be utilized within a particular district. If additional resources are needed, the BTIC acts as a broker to obtain these resources.

Considering the broad scope of services offered, the geographic area served, and the population eligible to apply for services through the BTIC, the program represents a vast undertaking. Under normal circumstances any institution the size of Glassboro State College with its limited resources could not have attempted a program of such scope. The Challenge Grant of the State of New Jersey provided the funds for BTIC. The college has committed itself to institutionalization of the BTIC. It is agreed that the BTIC will become a permanent component of teacher education at Glassboro State College.

* State requirement for all N-12 teachers in New Jersey Public Schools.

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